

What is Dominican Theology?

The Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) initiated a movement of renewal and change within the Catholic Church. This process is still far from being completed. We agree with the basic theological interpretation of Karl Rahner SJ that Vatican II is the “Church’s first official self-realization *as a World Church.*”¹ The Council marked the definitive end of European influence and domination of the Catholicity of the Church. With farsighted acumen, Rahner suggested that the process of creating an authentically polycentric World Church—including the differences within itself—would need time. In fact, Rahner thought of an entire century! Therefore, it is our task to deal with the globalization of society and the Church.

A Globalized World and a Universal Church

In 2013, the Roman Catholic Church elected the first Pope from Latin America. This result was a strong sign of a post-European universal church, as well as the symbol of a globalized world. In Bogotá in 2007, the General Chapter of the Dominican friars brought forward an analysis of the ambiguous double face of today’s globalized world: “From many sides, the world which we see today arouses great concern: conflicts; violence done to humanity; exclusions; suffering caused by migrations; the insecurity which many experience; new religious movements preaching exclusivity; the perverse effects of globalization [...]. We note also certain positive effects of globalization, such as the riches which the intercultural reality of our towns from now on represent, the improvement in the conditions of life produced by science and technology, the efforts to attain greater equality among men and women, the benefits of progress in the means of communication. It is this world of contrasts, with its fluctuating changes which affect us all, that we should love and retain hope for its future” (ACG Bogotá, 2007, no. 48).

Facing the twofold challenge of a polycentric universal world, the General Chapter of Bogotá stated that Dominicans “have to take responsibility for the global mission of the Order” (ACG Bogotá, 2007, no. 49).

Creating Local Theologies

Our responsibility for a global Dominican mission is effectual when contributing to the development of the local Church within the context of a globalized world. As Dominican sisters, friars, and lay people, we are called to reformulate the fruits of our tradition—such

as the ‘Summa’ of Thomas Aquinas, the Theology of Human Rights of the School of Salamanca or the ‘Nouvelle théologie’ of Marie-Dominique Chenu OP, Yves Congar OP, and Henri-Marie Féret OP—and to translate them into local and regional theologies of today’s needs. Edward Schillebeeckx OP has described this theological task as follows: How can the “selfsame Gospel, which is given only in a societal and cultural context (even in the New Testament, for the matter) and can never be wholly extricated from any culture, be allowed to speak the language of an entirely different culture?”²

Creating local theologies means to contextualize general theological systems. Clemens Sedmak—an Austrian philosopher and theologian who teaches at King’s College, London, and at the University of Salzburg—emphatically pleads for creating “small theologies.”³ According to Sedmak, the basic intention of ‘small theologies’ is to value people’s lives. Such a theological practice emphasizes the mystery of God-with-us as encountered “not in clear distinct ideas but in relationships; not in universal, abstract concepts but in particular, concrete sacraments and/or symbols; not through observation but through participation.”⁴ Closely related to this strategy is the so-called



‘Salamanca Process’, “an interactive dialogue between Academy and reality”⁵, which was initiated in the Dominican Order following the General Chapter of Rome in 2010.

Such ‘small theologies’ are rooted in a concrete time and place, in a certain locality. That is, they have a *locus*. Accordingly, our different realities can be understood, in the words of Melchor Cano OP (1506/09-1560), as *loci theologici*.⁶ We would thus like to see the various Dominican Study Centers all over the world creating such local theologies for the different social and ecclesiastical contexts.

Sedmak consistently interprets the letters of the former Master of the Order, Timothy Radcliffe OP (in office 1992-2001), which were addressed to the sisters and friars, as an important contribution to the development of a regional Theology of the Dominicans!⁷

Our Website Focusing on Dominican Theology

On the occasion of the 800th anniversary of the confirmation of the Order of Preachers, which we celebrate from 2016 to 2017, the current print issue of the German theological journal *Wort und Antwort* (edited by the Northern German province of Dominican Friars 'Teutonia') presents a variety of local Dominican theologies. We have invited sisters and brothers from all continents and from all branches of the Order—nuns and sisters, lay people and brothers (both friars and priests)—feminists and Thomists, younger and older—to answer the following question: “What is Dominican theology?” The result—eighteen very different articles—are presented in the original language or English translation on this website. Several thousand answers more are certainly possible... You are invited to react to the articles below. We hope for a lively debate—inside and outside the Order!

A Word of Thanks

We owe a debt of gratitude to all contributors and translators! We also wish to thank José David Padilla OP (Miami, FL, USA) for the permission to publish a detail of his cartoon (showing Albertus Magnus, Thomas Aquinas, and Margaret of Hungary) on the front cover of the print issue of the journal! We are indebted to Pierre de Marolles OP (Fribourg, Switzerland) for supplying us with a photo of José's cartoon. And, last but not least, we express our thanks to Johannes M. Schäffler OP (Köln, Germany) for his technical support.

Ulrich Engel OP / Dennis Halft OP

¹ K. Rahner, “Theologische Grundinterpretation des II. Vatikanischen Konzils,” in: idem, *Schriften zur Theologie*, vol. XIV, Zürich—Einsiedeln—Köln, 1980, 287-302, here 288: “Das II. Vatikanische Konzil ist [...] der erste amtliche Selbstvollzug der Kirche *als Weltkirche*.”

² E. Schillebeeckx, “Foreword,” in: R.J. Schreiter, *Constructing Local Theologies*, Maryknoll, NY, ¹²2012, IX-X, here IX.

³ See C. Sedmak, *Theologie in nachtheologischer Zeit*, Mainz, 2003, 117-126; idem, *Doing Local Theology. A Guide for Artisans of a New Humanity*, Foreword by R.J. Schreiter, Maryknoll, NY, 2002; idem, *Lokale Theologien und globale Kirche. Eine erkenntnistheoretische Grundlegung in praktischer Absicht*, Freiburg/Br., 2000.

⁴ M.A. De La Torre and E.D. Aponte, *Introducing Latino/a Theologies*, Maryknoll, NY, 2001, 155.

⁵ See the intranet of the Order of Preachers: <http://www.op.org/en/content/10-en-salamanca-process> [20 April 2016].

⁶ See Melchor Cano, *De locis theologicis*, ed. J. Belda Plans (BAC / Ser. maior vol. 85), Madrid, 2006.

⁷ See C. Sedmak, *Theologie in nachtheologischer Zeit*, l.c., 120.

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A Dominican Theology seeks and proclaims Truth-Incarnate. It is personal, enfleshed, and ever-emerging in response to the signs of the times. A Dominican theology is one that counters the heresy of dualism that comes to new expression in every age; it participates in the ongoing creation of God's one world, God's reign. Above all, a Dominican Theology, like the Order itself, is forged amidst evolving constellations of relationship for the sake of the Holy Preaching.

My own journey as a Dominican Theologian began in the matrix of my congregation's commitment to justice and ministry amongst the poor. My experience of ministry in the Bronx led me into countless scenarios of suffering where poor people of deep faith cried out "Why?" As I accompanied them on their pathways through the Paschal Mystery, I felt increasingly drawn to deeper theological study.

As I pursued doctoral studies, Edward Schillebeeckx's theology informed my reflection on suffering and nurtured my approach to its ongoing mystery. Dominican theologians and preacher-companions closer to home formed a community that kept my intellectual pursuits grounded in the praxis that can never be separated from the Order's commitment to study. A Dominican Theology must be ever responsive to the needs of the Body of Christ.

In subsequent years, the question of suffering in my work crystallized more and more into a focus upon the suffering of women, with concern for how dualistic elements in the Church reinforce that suffering. Women Religious in general are particularly attuned to this reality. As a Dominican Sister-Theologian, I believe that I/we have a distinct responsibility to claim the Order's historic, revolutionary mandate to preach Truth in the face of heresy; in fact, to take on the global authority of the unprecedented Magisterial role accorded to the Order of Preachers in Toulouse in 1215. In the 21st Century, can Dominican Women claim our magisterial role for the sake of transforming the world and the Church? Can we do it from the margins while maintaining communion with the hierarchy? A truly Dominican Theology should make this possible.

Dominic felt compelled to “save the Gospel for the Church.” Today, we are compelled to do this by saving the Church for the world. So many people who feel alienated from the Church and its Gospel, so many who dwell in a world of pain, are actually in need of precisely what the Church has to give when she is acting out of her authentic being. Can we remove the obstacles to the fountain of healing grace that the Church most truly is? Can we “save” the Church in its sanctifying, unifying role? A Dominican Theology is one that is committed to saving the Church for the sake of the salvation and ongoing creation of the world.

Finally, for some time now, I have been engaged as a theologian with my own congregation in our visioning of our Congregational Future. We have come to realize that we are being called to a stance of hospitality to the Future, to God summoning and drawing near. Indeed, we have felt summoned to be a place of hospitality, a home for those who feel “homeless” in the Church. Initially acknowledging a situation of impasse as Women Religious, we came to recognize through deepening contemplative practice that the Spirit has been alive and at work in dark, nourishing depths. We felt the call to attend to the summons of a future seeded by our Dominican past and imagined in terms of our place in the evolutionary cosmos. In the process, we have been drawn into deeper relationship with Dominican Women’s Congregations across the U.S., and have discovered a deep resonance in the ways in which the Dominican charism, the Dominican Story, is evolving in us and through us. Together, we are being summoned to risk a leap to the next evolutionary rung, to move from the “I” to the “We” to the “One” in mission to a world fragmented by violence and in need of mercy. As a theologian in this context, I feel called to embrace the tension between our presence to suffering human victims of injustice on the ground and fidelity to our evolutionary consciousness. A Dominican Theology is one that poses no dualism between the two. As Pope Francis remarked repeatedly in *Laudato si’*, “everything is related.” A Dominican Theology is one that is committed to the dissolving of every boundary in bringing to fruition Jesus’ desire “That they may be One.”

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German Translation by Sara Böhmer OP
(Thorn, The Netherlands):

Kathleen A. McManus, *Frauen transformieren Kirche und Welt*, in: *Wort und Antwort* 57 (2016), 81-82.



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Etymologically, theology is the “discourse on God”. However, theology is the product of a context, the way God relates to people in their context. So, “Dominican theology” is the discourse on God developed by Dominicans in theory and praxis. But to understand Dominican theology, one must go “back to the sources”. Browsing the “sources” I came across three themes which, traditionally, structure Dominican theology: faith and reason, creator and creatures, life and action. In these themes, I recognized figures in theology: Thomas Aquinas, Albert the Great and Raymond of Peñafort who applied theology to both life and action. I will track the source of Dominican theology by considering the primeval intuition of Saint Dominic himself, his spirit and action. The concern of Saint Dominic was truth and life as seen through his passion for study and spirit of compassion. Thus, I will deal with Dominican theology as lived and practiced by the Dominicans of Burundi and Rwanda via two points: Firstly, through the social and ecclesial context of Burundi and Rwanda and, secondly, through the concern and mission of Dominicans in this region.

Burundi and Rwanda are two countries with almost the same (Bantu) culture and social configuration. Their traditional religion centers on Imana, God, who is Creator (Rurema). Yet, like other Bantu people in Africa, Burundians and Rwandese are not theocentric. They are mainly anthropocentric as God does not feature in the categories that structure their worldview. It is here that the Gospel of Christ introduced by missionaries has an added value in our culture.

The Dominicans of Burundi and Rwanda are the products of evangelization by missionaries and encounter with the West through colonization. Both the Church of Burundi and Rwanda celebrated 100 years of evangelization recently. So, compared to other parts of the world, knowledge of Christ as the Messiah is relatively recent to this region. The positive effects of both colonization and evangelization were a result not without challenges. In the post-independent era, Burundi and Rwanda have known difficult moments. The building of a modern society has been marked by conflicts, sociopolitical hiccups and economic struggles, of which the Church has been involved either as a partner or a rival that the State considers

with suspicion. This can be seen in the crises that led to genocides, massacres and ethnic hatred, which have undermined economic progress, social harmony and the political culture of truth and life. It is in this context that Dominicans have concretely defined their theology. Hence the two questions! (1) How do Dominicans express what God is, says and does in the context of Burundi and Rwanda? (2) How is God's presence understood and lived in this context?

The concern underlining the Dominican mission in Burundi and Rwanda continues to be how to uphold truth and life in the context described above. When truth and life are compromised, God as Truth and giver of life is compromised. This is the framework that I consider the context of the Dominican mission.

Teaching and researching are aspects of Dominican study, and they are the apostolate of the intellect. In Burundi and Rwanda, Dominican brothers teach in universities, seminaries, institutions of higher learning, and work in research facilities such as Centre Ubuntu, Institute of Development and Economic Ethics (IDEE), Dominican Centre of Pastoral Research (CEDOREP), and are involved in the publication of books, the *Revue Ethique et Société*, *Cahiers Lumière et Société*, and other local and international periodicals. This is intellectual life in its fullest expression. The Dominican Albert Nolan argues that the intellectual life is not a job or a profession, but a way of life that provides a service to one's community or society. The intellectual is someone who serves others by dedicating his life to the pursuit of truth. In teaching and researching, the Dominicans of Burundi and Rwanda are in the search of truth. The ultimate truth is in God and is God by whom other truths are affirmed.

Burundi and Rwanda are wounded societies given recurrent conflicts, wars, genocides, massacres, and socio-political instability. They, in turn, cause poverty, economic decay and undermine life. Such a context requires renewed engagement in the fighting for and protection of the lives of the people. The Dominicans of Burundi and Rwanda have made this their apostolic mission. They try to be present wherever life is being undermined and they do so in a variety of ways: be they conflicts, wars, poverty, ignorance or whatever serves to undermine human dignity. This is seen in their various projects as diverse as: Agakura, human rights advocacy, justice and peace, reflections on the family, care for the vulnerable, and by their preaching via homilies and public lectures on these issues. The promotion and defense of life is also seen in their use of and reflection on local values, such as Ubuntu (humanity) and ubushingantahe (integrity, equity, truthfulness).

I conclude by summarizing that Dominican (African) theology is the discourse on God as developed, lived and practiced by Dominicans. Its nexus, as the basic intuition of Saint Dominic, has as its focus: truth as our motto, and life as our concern. I have considered and defined this theology within the context of the Dominicans of Rwanda and Burundi. As such, I have ascertained that Dominican theology is both speculative and contextual.

Symphorien Ntibagirirwa OP

German Translation by Christophe Holzer
OP (Munich, Germany):

Symphorien Ntibagirirwa, Forschen und
lehren für Ubuntu und ubushingantahe,
in: Wort und Antwort 57 (2016), 83-84.



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Au milieu du fracas des armes, Notre Père saint Dominique a fait le choix de la parole. L'annonce salvifique du Christ-*Logos*, Sagesse de Dieu et Puissance de Dieu, doit emprunter la voie du *logos*, c'est-à-dire de la parole et de la raison. La théo-logie, en tant que *logos*, s'inscrit donc dans la mission de l'Ordre puisqu'elle se propose d'incarner ou d'inculturer la Parole de Dieu dans l'intelligence humaine. Elle se présente comme une œuvre éminemment apostolique dans la mesure où, en cherchant l'intelligence de la foi, elle favorise l'accueil de la Parole, tantôt en écartant les obstacles intellectuels, tantôt en « traduisant » la Parole pour la rendre intelligible et féconde dans un contexte culturel donné.

Cette médiation entre la Parole et les cultures, où s'exprime la quête intellectuelle des hommes, impose au théologien un long et austère détour par le travail de la rationalité, avec ses fortes exigences d'universalité, d'objectivité et de cohérence. La théologie prend donc la forme d'une « étude », c'est-à-dire, selon la définition de saint Thomas, d'une application intense, violente même (*vehemens*) de l'esprit à quelque chose (*Summa theologiae, Ia-IIae, q. 166, a. 1*). C'est une des grâces de l'Ordre que de prendre au sérieux, malgré la force des sollicitations plus immédiates, la nécessité apostolique d'investir les frères dans une étude au long cours dont la fécondité ne se révèle que dans le long terme.

Cette entreprise théologique est chez nous communautaire. Certes, la vie d'étude est toujours éminemment personnelle, parfois même très solitaire, mais la communauté est l'écosystème qui lui permet de rester fidèle à ses vraies finalités. Face aux risques d'instrumentaliser le savoir au service de la promotion personnelle ou face à la tentation d'une « esthétique » intellectuelle coupée de la mission, la communauté est le lieu où s'effectue le « retour au réel ». Par la confrontation avec l'expérience de ses frères, par la célébration communautaire de la liturgie qui maintient le contact avec les sources vives de la foi, le théologien vérifie l'authenticité de son travail. Saint Thomas dit en *Sum. theol., Ia-IIae, q. 94, a. 2*, à propos des inclinations fondamentales de la nature humaine, que l'inclination propre à l'homme en tant

que rationnel est de chercher la vérité sur Dieu et de vivre en société. Je ne crois pas que, pour lui, ces deux inclinations soient simplement juxtaposées. Au contraire, la vie en communauté a précisément pour but de permettre une recherche de Dieu qui soit pleinement humaine, par l'échange et le dialogue.

Mais la dimension communautaire de notre théologie dominicaine est aussi diachronique. Notre théologie est en effet traditionnelle, au sens où le travail théologique des Prêcheurs s'inscrit dans une tradition intellectuelle et spirituelle qui le précède et qui le porte. Comme Prêcheurs, nous sommes héritiers non seulement d'une admirable galerie de portraits de théologiens mais aussi d'une tradition théologique continue et vivante, intimement liée à l'histoire de l'Ordre. Certes, l'histoire du thomisme est complexe, y compris à l'intérieur de l'Ordre. Le risque est permanent de transformer le thomisme en une « idéologie ». Il ne s'agit donc pas de cultiver un particularisme folklorique ni de promouvoir un très rassurant thomisme identitaire. Mais on ne peut non plus se contenter d'un thomisme d'inspiration qui rendrait hommage à l'« esprit » de saint Thomas, tout en puisant ailleurs ses principes doctrinaux, comme si l'« esprit » du thomisme pouvait être séparé de sa chair concrète. Une des missions intellectuelles de l'Ordre est plutôt de proposer et de développer, au bénéfice de toute l'Eglise, un thomisme substantiel et vivant. Substantiel, parce qu'il se réfère à la validité permanente des principes métaphysiques et théologiques fondamentaux de saint Thomas, aujourd'hui mieux compris grâce à l'étude contextualisée de son œuvre. Il est vrai que certains, légitimement soucieux du dialogue avec la modernité, estiment que la rupture entre l'univers culturel de Thomas et le nôtre est trop profonde pour permettre une actualisation du thomisme. Mais, justement, un thomisme vivant doit être capable de montrer sa fécondité dans la manière dont il répond aux nouvelles problématiques intellectuelles. Un beau défi pour l'Ordre.

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German Translation by Pascale Géraldine Schön (Limburg an der Lahn, Germany):

Serge-Thomas Bonino, Dominikanisches Studium als gemeinschaftliche Sendung, in: Wort und Antwort 57 (2016), 61-62.



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In the Latin American continent Dominican theology has to have as its starting point the values of the Gospel and a situation marked by poverty and oppression. The basis for theology is the faith of the Christian communities, and here most of them are composed of victims of social injustices. This is why we talk about liberation theology, the product of the liberating action of Christians committed to the values of the Kingdom of God, values opposed to all that is meant by the 'kingdom of Caesar'.

A Dominican theology coming from this context bears in mind that all of us Christians are disciples of a political prisoner. Jesus did not die ill in bed. Like so many Latin American martyrs, he was arrested, tortured, tried by two political powers and condemned to death on the cross. In a system of injustices and inequalities like ours, 'persecution for justice's sake' turns out to be a beatitude, for it defines which side Jesus' disciples take in the social conflict.

One of the challenges facing the Dominican family in Latin America is that of having Jesus' faith, and not just faith in Jesus. Jesus' faith was focused on fidelity to the programme of the Kingdom of God, which is to ensure that 'all may have life and have it abundantly' (John 10:10), and this programme is above all the work of the poor and the excluded with whom Jesus identified (Matt. 25:31-46), as Pope Francis insists so strongly.

A Dominican theology from Latin America must be an instrument and a light to strengthen our preaching and our Gospel witness. It keeps in mind the three commitments that define our vocation and our charism: (1) to fight for justice and for a society in which the goods of the Earth and the fruits of human labour are shared (poverty); (2) faithfulness to Saint Dominic's charism (obedience); (3) free self-giving in the surrender of our lives in love and solidarity to all, especially those who lack decent living conditions (chastity).

Theology will not have credibility unless it reflects the testimonies of our sisters and brothers who went before us in the mission to bring the Gospel to Latin America and in the spirit of the Gospel defended the rights and dignity of indigenous peoples, slaves, peasants, workers and

the excluded. These were Antonio de Montesinos, Antonio de Valdivieso, Bartolomé de Las Casas, Pedro de Córdoba, Rose of Lima, Martin de Porres, Brother Tito de Alencar Lima, and so many more who left the mark of their blood and Gospel commitment on the history of our continent.

It was in this faithfulness to Jesus as the way, the truth and the life that the Dominican brothers came to Brazil early in the 19th century. First they centred their apostolic mission where life was threatened, thanks to the constant genocide and the lack of a policy to protect them, among the indigenous peoples.

Later, in the middle of the 20th century, the Dominican apostolate made its priority the world of students, through the Catholic Action movements for secondary and university students (YCS). Peace comes as the fruit of justice, and so it was an urgent task to invest in the new generations which, untrammelled by property or family responsibilities, were able to get involved in the programme of establishing justice.

The perspective of the theology of sin switched from the individual to the social. The method adopted – See, Judge, Act – corresponded to the Dominican charism of coming to terms with the world around us, evaluating it in the light of the Word of God, and taking action to transform it by dismantling the world of injustice, inequality and oppression and building the world of justice that could create the conditions for peace to flourish.

In response to the military dictatorship of 1964-1985 and the worsening of Brazilian social conditions, together with the renewal of the Catholic Church inaugurated by the Second Vatican Council, the Dominicans adopted as their missionary priority the defence of the rights of the poorest and the recovery of democratic freedoms.

Some brothers engaged in direct resistance to the dictatorship and as a result suffered long years of imprisonment, while others entered the world of the poor, in the spirit of the ‘option for the poor’, in order to make the lower classes the leaders in the establishment of the right to justice and the conditions for peace.

So, in Brazil, the Dominican Justice and Peace Commission has become a ‘sacramental’ expression of the priorities chosen by the Order and the women’s congregations, and of the commitment of brothers, Dominican women, and lay Dominicans to the popular movements engaged in the search for ‘different possible worlds’.

Frei Betto OP

German Translation by Jörg Wegscheider
(Vienna, Austria):

Frei Betto, Dominikanische Theologie im
Kampf für Gerechtigkeit und Frieden, in:
Wort und Antwort 57 (2016), 59-60.



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I write as a lay theologian who teaches at the University of St. Michael's in Toronto (Canada) in areas related to Vatican II and the development of 19th and 20th century theology. My association with the Dominicans goes back to 1992 when I first arrived in Toronto. Over the years I have remained close with the friars of the community, who have always extended warmth and hospitality to all those who come to them. I have also collaborated with members of the community in various areas of research and in conference planning. Several years ago, I professed final vows as a lay member of the Order.

I won't answer the question "What is Dominican Theology?" in any definitive, objective or propositional sense. Instead, I offer some hallmarks of what I have come to know as characterizing Dominican theology. These are also the reasons that I find so easily a home in the Order. I offer three memorable encounters that have struck me as emblematic and then conclude with some summary comments.

In 1994, during my first trip to Rome I met Fr. Leonard Boyle OP, who had already left Toronto and was at the time Prefect of the Vatican Library. He welcomed me and gave me a lengthy tour that concluded in the Salone Sistino. At the end of our meeting, he pointed to the paintings of the Ecumenical Councils that hung on the walls. He drew my attention to the center of each painting, pointing to the book of the Gospels surrounded by the Council Fathers. He said: "You see, Michael, it is always about the Book. Never forget that." I would be reminded of this, years later when I read Henri-Marie Féret OP's response to the Master, Emmanuel Suarez in 1954 when the Order was under investigation by the Holy Office. Against the Curia's rigid, procedural juridicism Féret insisted that he must continue to preach the Gospel.

The next story is about the first time I met Fr. Jean-Marie Tillard OP. I had been studying ecclesiology and ecumenism and had already read much of his work. One year I traveled to Fribourg to research at the University and stayed at the Albertinum. Fr. Tillard was there. We spent the entire time talking about theology. I will always remember him emphasizing that,

for Dominicans, the oldest sources are the most authoritative – right back to the words and deeds of Christ and the apostolic preaching. Many times over the years, I would hear him repeat the same thing.

Finally, ten years ago, we invited a notable Dominican theologian to St. Michael's to speak to our graduate students about the vocation of the theologian. The subject of religious life came up and the roles that communities and theologians have played in the work of theology in the history of Church. Our speaker postulated that religious orders go through 150 year cycles, after which they either renew themselves and continue for another 150 years, or they cease. Dominicans, he said, have been successful because their ministry is perennially relevant to all times and places.

These brief vignettes illustrate the two elements or hallmarks that for me comprise Dominican theology: the Gospel of God incarnate in the person of Jesus of Nazareth and revealed through his saving words and deeds 2000 years ago; and the proclamation of this Gospel, made present and alive in all times and all places for the needs of the world. Indeed, as the primitive constitutions affirm, the Dominicans were founded to preach the Gospel for the sake of salvation. Dominican theology always returns to the well-spring of the Good News in order to deliver life-giving water to the world. As circumstances and the needs have changed so too has the teaching and preaching. We take for example proclamation of the message of salvation. When Thomas Aquinas taught of salvation, he understood the Gospel to have already been preached to the entire world. Centuries later, when European Christians – Dominicans such as Bartolomé de Las Casas – arrived in the New World, the very idea of “world” expanded and so too did the idea of salvation. Today, the proclamation of salvation includes the work that is done to overcome violence, poverty, structures that marginalize, oppress, and dehumanize people. In light of recent challenges throughout the world, the need for this work continues to be great.

Dominican theology is not one that is fixed for all times and places. It returns to the sources of Christian life and faith and preaches it anew to a world that awaits it.

Michael S. Attridge OPL

German Translation by Peter Spichtig OP
(Fribourg, Switzerland):

Michael S. Attridge, Zurück zu den
Quellen und hinein in die Welt, in: Wort
und Antwort 57 (2016), 53-54.



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El ministerio de la predicación en la Orden de Predicadores y como Familia Dominicana se redescubre como un ministerio para todos y todas, nada de exclusivo para algunos y nada de excluyente, todo lo contrario, compartimos hombre y mujeres, este carisma que nos exige vivir los elementos día a día: estudio, contemplación, comunidad y predicación.

Por ello a nivel Latino Americano, de la Amerindia diversa y plural, por la década de los 90', se gestó un espacio de reflexión teológica de las mujeres dominicas, uniendo a mujeres deseosas de plantear y narrar las propias experiencias de Dios, desde los lugares en donde teníamos raíces. Fueron diez años de hacer teología desde nuestro ser de mujeres dominicas en América Latina, extendiéndose al norte de América. Fue un tiempo de gracia en la cual pude ser parte de ese proceso y ruta teológica. Aparte de mis estudios universitarios, licenciatura y maestría, ese tiempo resultó muy formativo y asentó un norte y un desde dónde hacer teología: *desde abajo y en lenguaje de mujer*.

Este rehacer se configura en elementos que se convierten en actitudes de vida, que hacen del quehacer teológico:

1. *Desde abajo*. Porque las mujeres estamos insertas en su mayoría, seamos religiosas o laicas, en mi caso en un barrio, en el cerro San Miguel de Cochabamba en Bolivia. Caminamos entre el quehacer de la casa o comunidad, entre la cocina y el escritorio, entre el negocio o la "tienda" de la esquina y las clases, entre la conversación en el "trufi" (movilidad o medio de transporte) o micro y las reflexiones..., no importa la lengua que se hable, el modo de vestirnos, de cantar y bailar. De este modo se genera la predicación, desde ahí se busca la verdad, desde lo pequeño, lo humilde, lo cotidiano, desde Abya yala, la amerindia originaria.
2. *Tejiendo espacios abiertos*. Al modo de Domingo que caminaba por los caminos abriendo horizontes de verdad y amistad. En espacios de búsqueda de la verdad, la diversidad de colores, el o la diferente, lo plural no es obstáculos para el diálogo, el intercambio e saberes.

3. *En solidaridad.* Con tantas mujeres que no tienen derecho, ni espacio ni voz, porque se nos ha silenciado por siglos. Cada día salen a la luz realidades y situaciones de violencia, de exclusión e incluso de muerte en torno a la mujer, lo que exige gestar redes de escucha, de protección, de ayuda y de escribir sus propias historias, en donde Dios nunca abandona.
4. *En lenguaje de mujer.* Mujeres que narran historias, cuentan los pequeños y grandes momentos del paso de Dios por sus vidas. El lenguaje fluye en forma narrativa, se cuenta lo vivido, lo que se vive y lo que se está por vivir junto al Dios de la vida y la historia. Es un lenguaje circular, íntimo, afectivo, con fuerza y poder, que genera vida desde lo cotidiano, se convierten en actitudes de vida que promueven cambios en lo pequeño y en lo grande, todo está conectado... no hay hilos sueltos, todo es parte del ser.

La vida con su historia y sus encuentros en lo cotidiano, ha ido dando pasos y abriendo caminos, ¡por fin!, para que las mujeres teólogas podamos poner palabra, texto y narración teologal en las reflexiones que la comunidad eclesial y ecuménica espera en cada momento del acontecer hermenéutico de la presencia de Dios en la humanidad, su querer y su proyecto.

Según Catalina de Siena el conocimiento de sí mismas es el punto de partida y a la vez el cimiento fundamental para realizar este camino (cf. M. Soto Ahumada, *Hermenéutica del Ministerio de la Predicación Dominicana en perspectiva Teología Feminista desde América Latina*, Cochabamba, 2015, 102)... el camino teológico, en donde no podemos olvidar a aquellas mujeres valientes, atentas a la mesa del santo deseo. Entre todas tejemos santos deseos alrededor de la mesa, tejido de gran colorido por la diversidad de experiencias y de desafíos.

De este modo, con el tiempo, entre huellas, deseos compartidos tomamos la palabra en nombre de la Palabra, asumimos la responsabilidad del Amor de Dios, del Dios humanado para hacer teología, en medio de los caminantes de diversos pueblos, poniendo el oído donde salta, susurra o corre la historia de la salvación.

Es un proceso a ritmo de mujer y latinoamericano, integrándose a los diálogos teológicos lo propio del mundo indígena, de los afroamericano, de los mestizo, junto con ello el sufrimiento, la opresión y exclusión de las mujeres, haciendo causa con los varones y todo aquel que busque espacios de igualdad y liberación (cf. M. Soto Ahumada, *Hermenéutica*, 130).

Es teología que compromete a ser parte de ese Reino anunciado por los profetas y las profetas, por el Dios humanado, por mujeres y hombres creyentes con la agilidad de María Magdalena, como nuestras propias madres y padres que nos mostraron el rostro de Él, que nos amó y nos ama tanto, que hace posible dar la vida por los y las amigas en este mundo de duelo y esperanza, de violencia y paz, de vacíos y vida... seguir escribiendo en nombre de Dios Padre y Madre.

Marcela Soto Ahumada OP

German Translation by Julian Eder
(Vienna, Austria):

Marcela Soto Ahumada, Feministische
Theologie in Amerindia, in: Wort und
Antwort 57 (2016), 87-88.



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According to the Fundamental Constitutions of our Order, the aim of our entire Dominican existence is the “salvation of souls” or, in other words, “life to the full” for all people (John 10:10). Dominican study, therefore, has to be directed towards the salvation of people. For Dominican theologians, this means that, in their work, they are always at the “service of life” (M.-D. Chenu), extending far beyond the borders of the Church. The frame of reference for what the term “salvation of souls” means is Holy Scripture, the unalterable foundation of all theology. As Dominicans, we have an additional reference point, not only in the history of theology as a whole but, in particular, in our 800 year history as an Order, during which Sisters and Brothers at varying times succeeded, to a greater or lesser extent, in achieving this aim in their concrete circumstances.

It follows that a central aim of Dominican theology is to identify and pinpoint current states and experiences of salvation, and to interpret them in the light of faith. This should be a relatively easy task in a country like Austria which, by international standards, is among those with the highest quality of life. Not alone material wealth, but also the natural and cultural treasures, the human rights situation etc., can be counted as “structures of salvation” and made fruitful for proclaiming the Gospel. Such a theology could also have a healing effect when one considers that the subjective state of mind of the population is surprisingly negative given their objective quality of life.

A second theological task is to sense evil in all its forms, to name it, to reflect on its causes and, not least, to develop perspectives pointing towards the fullness of life. It is not enough to criticise injustice. As followers of St Dominic, we are called to be “prophets of hope” (M. Díez).

Faced with the infinite complexities of life, we would be well advised to take as our starting point that which is closest to us and to consider life and death where we are. Due to our global interconnectedness, this local perspective will, in any case, carry us out into the wider world. In addition, the complexity of many issues requires an academic foundation to our theology.

The diversification and increasing specialisation of sciences and the humanities positively calls for interdisciplinary collaboration. In this, the task of theologians is not to lecture quasi ex cathedra but, from a place of genuine interest and on an equal footing, to search for life-promoting approaches together with experts from other disciplines.

Theologians who work and speak in such a way will, as a result, become important players in the social discourse. Asked or otherwise, and despite all taboos, they will bring the Gospel and Christian faith as a deciding factor to politics, economics, medicine etc. – in short, to all areas of human life. Theology can thus become a performative power which in “the following of Jesus penetrates deeply into the course of human history” (G. Gutiérrez).

True to the model of the founder of our Order, Dominicans will give preference to the dialogical, above all to the verbal word, rather than the monological word, particularly the written one. The credibility given to us as theologians depends considerably on how we are perceived as people. Is there a noticeable commitment to the world and a passion for faith and the Order? Have we embodied and enacted that to which our theology has led us in our thinking? In our words and deeds, do we show ourselves to be Gospel people like Dominic? One thing is clear: only the word from the heart can reach the soul of the other in a healing way.

An ongoing obstacle in this dialogue is our technical language which is often perceived as antiquated and obscure. Since, as theologians, we draw to a great extent on historical sources that use the language of their era, this remains a challenge to be faced. As F. Betto puts it, it is impossible to make oneself understood today if speaking a language of a past world. This is particularly true for a non-biblical vocabulary that developed over centuries and never with the intention of being perpetually valid. Neither are we concerned with creating an eternally valid theology, but rather with making faith communicable today, by searching, in dialogue with others, for words that express our message of salvation in an understandable and impressive way.

Certainly, such an approach needs the courage to experiment and the audacity to make mistakes or to fail in the process. This not only risks drawing criticism on oneself. We expose ourselves to the world with what is sacred to us. We do so in humble awareness of the limitations of ourselves and of our theology, but equally aware of the absoluteness of the sacred of which we speak. This is an ambitious task. Dominican spirituality calls us to keep contemplation and ministry in a harmonious balance, not for the fulfillment of this task but to allow us to persevere in it. Carried by the community of Sisters and Brothers, a unique energy springs from prayer which can be a saving and healing power, not only for us but for all for whom we work.

Theresa Hieslmayr OP

German Original:

Theresa Hieslmayr, Dominikanische
Theologie im Dienst des Lebens, in: Wort
und Antwort 57 (2016), 73-74.



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At the beginning of our life in the Order, we were asked one question: “What do you seek?” We prostrated, and with our faces to the floor of the church, we responded: “God’s *mercy* and yours”. We are Dominicans because of God’s mercy. If our lives as *Dominicans* began with that primary desire to obtain mercy, then the study of theology, as Dominicans, ought to proceed from the same impetus. It is no wonder that our Master of the Order, Fr. Bruno Cadoré OP, has rightly pointed out the providential confluence between the *Jubilee of the Order* and the *Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy*.

We are called upon to teach and preach Jesus, “the face of the Father’s mercy.”¹ The ministry of the Word, the Order’s charism to preach Jesus, is in fact a sublime work of mercy, an act of charity, for “the greatest act of charity is evangelization... There is no action more beneficial – and therefore more charitable – towards one’s neighbor than to break the bread of the word of God, to share with him the Good News of the Gospel, to introduce him to a relationship with God.”² It is no wonder then that our motto *veritas* is now understood as “Passion for the Truth and Compassion for Humanity.”³

Pope Francis described good theologians as akin to good shepherds who smell like the people, who bear the odor of God’s flock, and who “with their reflection, pour oil and wine on the wounds of the people” (cf. Luke 10:34). How could the study of theology help in healing wounded souls and in bringing hope to fractured communities? The first thing we must do is to go where the wounded are. Teaching and studying theology, the Pope tells us, means “living on a frontier, one in which the Gospel meets the needs of the people which should be proclaimed in an understandable and meaningful way.”⁴ Thomas Aquinas stood at this frontier when he creatively engaged Aristotelian and Arabic thought. Francisco de Vitoria and Bartolomé de Las Casas stood on the frontier between the ‘old world’ and the ‘new world’ and fought, through their theological reflection and ministry, against the temptations of racism and colonialism.

Our Dominican confreres identified some of these *frontiers of evangelization* a few years ago in Ávila (General Chapter of Ávila, 1986):

1. The *frontier between life and death*, or the challenge of justice and peace in the world, the frontier where economic and political structures place a large number of people between life and death situations.
2. The *frontier between humanity and inhumanity*, or the challenge of the marginalized, the frontier described by the Pope as a “throw-away culture”, where people are seen as “disposable”, a frontier that is partly created by an economy of exclusion.
3. The *frontier of Christian experience*, or the space where Christianity meets the major religious traditions of the world.
4. The *frontier of religious experience*, or the challenge of secularization, where religion is pushed away from the public and transferred to the private sphere.
5. The *frontier of the Church*, or the sphere where the Catholic Church meets the plurality of Christian confessions and movements.

We need not go far so as to stand at the crossroads of any of these frontiers that often intersect one another. We find the borders between humanity and inhumanity, between life and death on our very streets. Pope Francis says that poverty and hunger in our world is a scandal. But a bigger scandal is that we are no longer scandalized; we have become immune and desensitized to pain and suffering around us. We are no longer bothered by this “negative experience of contrast.” If we are God’s children, how is it that so many people live lives that are beneath the dignity of God’s children? God’s generous providence is terribly offended when His children go hungry in a fruitful world, go naked in a world filled with all kinds of materials for clothing, and go homeless and landless in a wide and spacious world.

How can we help bind the wounds of our brothers and sisters on the frontiers? A faith that seeks to understand and transform the negative experience of contrast eventually finds *miser cordia veritatis*, the mercy of truth.

For Pope Francis, the hermeneutic key to understanding, especially to theological understanding, is mercy. In his message to the youth of the Philippines, he said: “The marginalized weep, those who are neglected weep, the scorned weep, but those of us who have relatively comfortable lives, we don’t know how to weep. Certain realities of life are seen only with eyes that are cleansed by tears.”⁵ Compassion cures our blindness. Our study must ultimately lead us to perceive human crises, needs, longings and sufferings as our own. Good theology is “linked with that *miser cordia* which moves us to proclaim the Gospel of God’s love for the world and the dignity which results from that love” (General Chapter of Providence, 2001, no. 108). Only then could we say with the Church: “The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the people of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ” (*Gaudium et spes*, 1).

Filipinos instinctively know that mercy is a key to understanding. For us, mercy is not just a matter of the heart but of the mind as well. It is interesting, that for us, to “know” or “understand” is to be “compassionate”. The Filipino word *Unawa* (*una ang awa*, literally, “first, mercy”) encapsulates this best. *Upang maunawaan natin ng lubusan ang isang tao, kailangang mauna ang awa*. To understand is not merely “to stand-under”; for us, human understanding is ultimately sympathetic or compassionate understanding. A merciful attitude disposes us to understand persons and our world better. Mercy is no mere sentimentality. It involves both heart and mind. Similarly, understanding is not purely cognitive. *Unawa* makes the heart and mind one. “Compassion brings humility to our preaching [and teaching] – humility for which we are willing to listen and speak, to receive and give, that we may influence and be influenced, to be evangelized and to evangelize.”⁶ Mercy brings us to the frontiers and thresholds, and therefore, to the possibility of encounter. In 2015, Pope Francis wrote in the guestbook of the University of Santo Tomas, Manila: “May the Lord bless all those studying and working for a culture of encounter.” Encounter only happens on thresholds, on frontiers, where we meet the other. If secularization involves the separation of the sacred from the profane, a culture of encounter brings us to the very space where such separation happens and bridges the gap between the sacred and the secular. A culture of encounter brings the Church out of the sacristy to the world. A culture of encounter wakes up the Church before it can dare to “wake the world up”; it wakes the Church and refocuses its gaze from its self-referential image to the world. Secularization occurs when there is a radical separation of the ‘City of God’ from the ‘City of Man’. But the Church can avoid being a ghetto that is closed in on itself when it embraces “the joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the men of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted” (*Gaudium et spes*, 1) as its very own.*

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German Translation by Johannes M.
Schäffler OP (Cologne, Germany):

Gerard Francisco Timoner III., *Praxis der Barmherzigkeit an Grenzen*, in: *Wort und Antwort* 57 (2016), 89-90.

¹ Pope Francis, *Misericordiae Vultus*, 2015, no. 1.

² Pope Benedict XVI, *Message for Lent 2013*, no. 3.

³ See Mary O’Driscoll, *Catherine of Siena: Passion for the Truth, Compassion for Humanity*, Hyde Park, NY, 2005.

⁴ Pope Francis, *Letter to the Grand Chancellor of the Pontificia Universidad Católica Argentina*, 2015.

⁵ *Idem*, *Meeting with young people in Manila*, 2015.

⁶ Carlos Aspiroz Costa OP, *Proclaiming the Gospel in the Order of Preachers*, 2002.

* Extracts from this article were included in a commencement address of the author at the Loyola School of Theology, Ateneo de Manila University, Quezon City, on 18 March 2015.



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N'étant pas historien, et encore moins historien des doctrines, je laisse les spécialistes compétents rendre compte de la manière dont, au fil de l'histoire, la théologie dominicaine s'est révélée, ou non, avoir une spécificité bien identifiable. Mon propos, s'appuyant sur l'écoute des frères et sœurs lors de mes visites dans l'Ordre, voudrait plutôt exprimer trois traits qui me semblent constituer un point commun au travers de la diversité de l'Ordre.

1) Une théologie dominicaine est une théologie de la prédication : Ce premier trait semblera évident à beaucoup, puisque l'Ordre est souvent présenté comme un Ordre de prêcheurs et de théologiens. Ou, pour l'exprimer mieux, de « prêcheurs-théologiens ». Ce trait me semble essentiel de trois points de vue.

C'est une théologie de la prédication de Jésus-Christ. Le mystère de la venue du Fils, qui s'approche et se fait familier et ami de ses interlocuteurs. Tel est un des éléments les plus fondamentaux de la théologie dans l'Ordre : tenter de rendre le plus intelligible possible le mystère de cette « approche de Dieu », tel qu'il se révèle à la mesure où l'on enracine la réflexion théologique dans ce patient travail d'interprétation qui scrute les Ecritures. Une théologie fondée dans l'Ecriture – telle fut bien la théologie de Thomas d'Aquin.

C'est une théologie à partir de la prédication et, en ce sens une théologie pastorale, non pour rendre compte des enjeux théologique de la pastorale, mais plutôt de la raison pour laquelle il y a pastorale : la venue du Fils de Dieu parmi les hommes, afin que ces derniers reçoivent la vie en abondance. Un tel labeur théologique est stimulé, appelé, par les expériences pastorales elles-mêmes, comme en témoignent certaines grandes figures de l'Ordre : Montesinos et Vitoria, lorsque la résistance s'impose face à une expansion coloniale qui ne respecte pas la dignité de tous les hommes, sans exclusive ; la grâce contemplée lors du ministère du sacrement de réconciliation ; le frère Lebret qui cherche à montrer comment le développement des peuples est étroitement lié au mystère du salut universel ; le frère Gustavo Gutierrez dans son élaboration des fondements d'une théologie de la libération... La prédication appelle la théologie.

C'est, enfin, une théologie « de » la prédication qui s'attache, à travers l'explicitation du geste de la prédication, à montrer combien l'Eglise est établie par l'Esprit du Christ ressuscité au fil de la réalisation de sa mission d'évangélisation.

2) *Une théologie dominicaine est une théologie de la grâce* : Depuis le concile Vatican II, on a souvent insisté sur la nécessité de la lecture et du discernement des « signes des temps », c'est à dire de la reconnaissance des traces de l'œuvre de l'Esprit au cœur des réalités du monde comme au cœur de chacun. C'est certainement ce qui a habité la théologie du frère Marie-Dominique Chenu, scrutant la « pâte humaine », de sorte de discerner qu'elle est traversée de part en part par l'œuvre de la grâce de la miséricorde de Dieu. De ce point de vue, une théologie de la grâce cherche à rendre intelligible l'incessant mouvement de la miséricorde de Dieu qui, ému de compassion jusque dans ses entrailles, ne cesse de rejoindre son peuple pour lui donner, toujours à nouveau, naissance.

C'est ainsi une théologie qui, contemplant le désir gratuit de Dieu que sa création se réalise pleinement en toutes ses potentialités, s'attache à interpréter tant le renouvellement intérieur de chaque être, que le renouvellement des sociétés humaines. Croisement de deux dignités, de la personne et des peuples, qui a marqué l'élaboration théologique dans l'Ordre.

3) *Une théologie dominicaine est une théologie en dialogue* : On n'insistera jamais assez sur la double décision par laquelle Dominique a fondé son Ordre : envoyer les frères deux par deux pour prêcher la Parole, les envoyer – et aller avec eux – se mettre à l'écoute des maîtres de son temps dans les Universités. Cette intuition a été déterminante pour Thomas d'Aquin qui élaborait sa réflexion théologique en entrant en dialogue avec les philosophies qui lui étaient accessibles, Aristote, Averroès, Maïmonide. La philosophie se révélant ne pas être simplement « servante » que la théologie pourrait utiliser, mais bien servante en ce sens qu'en stimulant l'intelligibilité critique de la réalité elle indique au théologien les questions qu'il doit affronter en fonction de l'histoire des idées et elle lui donne des éléments conceptuels pour rendre compte du mystère du salut au sein de ce contexte.

A cause de cela, la théologie dominicaine veut se tenir en dialogue avec les savoirs qui lui sont contemporains à ce moment de l'histoire, en s'appuyant sur une connaissance approfondie de la tradition doctrinale de l'Eglise et de sa constitution progressive en un corpus cohérent. La théologie peut en effet avoir avec ces savoirs un rapport analogue à celui qu'elle a avec la philosophie. Et ce, d'autant plus que les savoirs contemporains, en cela qu'ils manifestent comment l'homme cherche à comprendre les réalités du monde et à les maîtriser, appellent la théologie à se déployer en cherchant à poser la créativité humaine au cœur du mystère du salut. Cette étude patiente de la créativité de la raison humaine est en effet un point d'appui pour la recherche de la plus grande intelligibilité possible de Dieu qui se manifeste à l'homme.

Ce désir de dialogue s'appuie sur la conviction que l'autre a quelque chose de vrai à partager avec nous, qu'il soit philosophe, expert en l'un des nouveaux savoirs, croyant d'une autre religion, étudiant, travailleur, jeune ou plus âgé... Chacun des interlocuteurs nous aide à découvrir davantage la vérité que nous cherchons, à mieux connaître qui est Dieu.

Au cœur de ce dialogue, l'Ordre des Prêcheurs a très souvent placé aussi le dialogue avec les autres religions. Certes, parce que ces dernières révèlent la diversité dont l'homme se révèle capable dans son rapport à la transcendance et au divin. Mais aussi, parce que chacune, à sa manière, atteste de l'effort qu'il faut déployer pour préciser le type de rapport – et sa fécondité – du religieux avec le monde.

Faut-il ajouter que parler d'une théologie en dialogue, c'est souligner aussi l'exigence d'un dialogue authentique entre les frères, entre les frères et les sœurs, et au sein de la famille dominicaine ? Un dialogue qui « constitue » la communauté, à la mesure même où il la conduit à trouver sa source dans la quête d'une vérité qui se donne et que nul ne peut prendre.

Qu'est-ce qu'une théologie dominicaine ? Et si c'était la joie humble et partagée de la contemplation ?

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German Translation by Max Cappabianca
OP (Berlin, Germany):

Bruno Cadoré, Predigt der Gnade im
Dialog, in: Wort und Antwort 57 (2016),
65-67.



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“Community thinking” is an essential and important topic for Dominican theology. Community is one of the pillars of the Order of Preachers and the place where the Dominican vocation is realised. What might be the key element in conceptualising of a specifically African-Dominican theology¹

One of the most important and decisive elements in African thinking is *the principle of the life force* (force vitale), as Placide Tempels, a Belgian Franciscan missionary in the Belgian Congo, has pointed out.² The missionary links the life force with the Gospel of John in which Christ calls himself *the life*. In the African context, life or life force is the “highest principle of ethical action”. In this sense, life has to be understood in terms of community interconnectedness.

Community, in African tradition, is “that place which makes the self-realization of the person possible” (B/ED, 25). This is not about the connection between individual and individual but “rather about the relationship of the individual to the *community* and vice versa” (B/WU, 19). If Africans want to pursue an *African-Dominican theology*, Dominican theology must thus be done in an African culture. It is necessary, therefore, to adapt the Cartesian formula “cogito ergo sum [sumus] – I think therefore I am” to an African understanding of the human which is both *existential* and *relational*: “Cognatus sum [sumus], ergo sumus – I am [we are] related, therefore we are” (see B/WU, 18-19). As Bénézet Bujo writes: “According to this principle [‘cognatus sum – sumus’], a person can become a person only in community with others. [...] The underlying conviction is that human beings act all the more effectively the more they maintain solidarity with their own kind” (B/WU, 20).

In contrast to the Western-Christian system of thought, in Africa, community does not limit itself to “the concrete, visible community” but “rather also includes the deceased; and even the not-yet-born constitute an important dimension” (B/WU, 20).

In his important book “Gott der Menschen”, Ulrich Engel OP, following Jürgen Habermas’ theory of communicative action and Karl-Otto Apel’s discourse ethics, interprets the “Dominican Order as a practically constituted communication community”.³ I am particularly interested in Habermas’ theory of communicative action: Does this Western system of thought correspond to the concern of an African-Dominican theology? And can an African model enter into dialogue with Western discourse?

Rationality is an important term in Habermas’ discourse ethics. Indeed, “every subject with the competence to speak and act is allowed to take part in a discourse.”⁴ U. Engel commented on the rules of discourse as follows: “The practical discourse is thus characterised by the fact that potentially all concerned are factually included in the argumentation and the discourse. According to Habermas, only this so-defined principle of universalization constitutes the *formal-procedural* precondition according to which an intersubjectively secured consensus can be achieved.”⁵ For a discourse to result in a rational consensus for communicative action, each participating subject with the competence to speak and act must argue rationally. It follows that those who do not argue according to the given rules of discourse do not belong to the communication community.

In contrast to the discourse procedure, the African palaver model includes not only those subjects with the competence to speak and act but every human being (see B/WU, 89). The deepest sense of the palaver is that “the word” has an enormous power. Bénézet Bujo stresses that in this Africans feel very close to the biblical text because the word actually generates that for which it was sent. This means that the word can either create or destroy community; it brings life or death (see B/WU, 71, 209). This is because “the palaver model is existential and sapiential at the same time. It is actively in contact with all tiers of society so that it [society] in no way incapacitates itself through the ‘sapientes’” (B/ED, 33). For the palaver, not only the “competence and experience” of all participants counts in the “ideal communication community” or rather “clan community” but the dead are also considered. In this, one reaches consensus by arguing in a non-dominant way and by seeking only the good of the clan community.

The first kind of palaver applies to the so called “marriage in stages”. In sub-Saharan Africa, a wedding is performed in three stages and is not only a consensus between bridegroom and bride but also a consensus between the two families, a consensus of society. The three steps of the marriage ceremony are: traditional marriage according to African customs (in the presence of the two families), civil marriage (at the registry office) and religious marriage (in the church). Bénézet Bujo writes about this: “Concerning the Christian understanding of marriage, it has to be pointed out that, for example, not only bride and bridegroom are ministers of the sacrament, as Catholic theology teaches, but that this function is also essentially attributed to the families of the married couple and to their communities.”⁶ From the Christian African perspective, a man or a woman is only married after the three stages have been completed. The number of stages, however, depends on the particular ethnic group. B. Bujo advocates that “the Church should recognise the traditional marriage in stages by accompanying it from the outset” (B/ZG, 94).

Since the evangelization of sub-Saharan Africa, marriage and family are among the most burning pastoral issues. Missionaries were confronted with this from the very beginning. Without knowledge of *African anthropology*, it is difficult to understand the African idea of marriage and family. The African bishops write: "The understanding of marriage and family in African traditions comes from the African cosmology that defines the main role human beings play in the continuation of life. Marriage in African traditions is altogether a social, community, religious and cosmic event."⁷

Based on the African understanding of life, community is the most important element of the African worldview. In this sense, the African family consists of a three-dimensional community, i.e. *those currently in this world*, the *deceased* and the *not-yet-born*. Each category is only a partial community and each is dependent on the others. The living have a *chance of survival* only if they give *due honour* to their dead. Equally, the dead can only be happy if they live on in the *memory* and in the *reverence of the living*. The not-yet-born represent an instance of hope for the living and the dead. The family will live on through the not-yet-born. There is an ongoing mutual interrelatedness between these three parts of the African family.

With regards to the initial question of whether there is a specific African community thinking vis-à-vis Western-Dominican theology, one can, without doubt, give a positive answer. If one wants to do Dominican theology, however, one has to put the *human person*, regardless of abilities, at the centre of theological discourse. Only in this way can the African model of palaver enter into dialogue with the Western-Dominican system of thought, based on the "Dominican discourses on truth".

Jean-Bertrand Madragule Badi OP

German Original:

Jean-Bertrand Madragule Badi,
Afrikanisches Palaver im Dienst am
Leben, in: Wort und Antwort 57 (2016),
79-80.

¹ I draw in particular on the Congolese theologian B. Bujo, *Wider den Universalanspruch westlicher Moral. Grundlagen afrikanischer Ethik*, Freiburg/Br., 2000 (= B/WU); idem, *Die ethische Dimension der Gemeinschaft. Das afrikanische Modell im Nord-Süd-Dialog*, Freiburg/Br., 1993 (= B/ED).

² See B/WU, 17; idem, *Afrikanische Theologie in ihrem gesellschaftlichen Kontext*, Düsseldorf, 1986, 61-63.

³ See U. Engel, *Gott der Menschen. Wegmarken dominikanischer Theologie*, Ostfildern, 2010, 14-40.

⁴ J. Habermas, *Moralbewußtsein und kommunikatives Handeln*, Frankfurt/M., 1984, 99.

⁵ See U. Engel, *Gott der Menschen*, l.c., 14-40.

⁶ B. Bujo, "Im Zentrum steht die Gemeinschaft. Wie man in Afrika Ehe und Familie versteht," in: *Herder Korrespondenz* 69,2 (2015), 92-96, 93 (= B/ZG).

⁷ SECAM. THE FAMILY, OUR FUTURE. Contribution to the 3rd Extraordinary Synod of Bishops. Roma, 4.-19.10.2014, Accra, 2014, no. 3 (http://www.africamission-mafr.org/final_document_SECAM_for_SYNOD_family..pdf [6 May 2016]).



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The Dominican way has at times been described as a “Wayless Way” since in Dominican tradition there seems no particular method or technique – such as the Ignatian Exercises – that is constitutive of being Dominican. Yet, in the lives of many Dominicans throughout history, I find several attributes which can be seen as characteristic of Dominican theology.

The Dominican guides who have most shaped my understanding of how to do theology as a Dominican are Thomas Aquinas, Catherine of Siena, Meister Eckhart and Bartolomé de Las Casas, as well as Dominic himself. I also value the contribution that feminist and liberation theologies make to deepening that understanding.

In the person of Dominic I see a “working theology” shaped through a life of prayer, community, and the study of divine Truth in scripture and the book of life. Poverty of spirit, the primacy of Truth, and contemplation expressed in active ministry are also important Dominican values. Dominican theology is dialogical, contextual, and engaged.

In Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) we see how his scholarly work both fed into and was nourished by his mysticism. The course of Thomas’s life led him to the known frontiers of the intellectual world of his time where he came into contact with the works of Greek, Arab, and Jewish scholars, and engaged with the newly influential writings of an ancient philosopher, Aristotle. The result was a dialogue with the entire corpus of Christian teaching in such a way that a new theological methodology and outlook were born. At times it still has a brilliant clarity to shine on today’s questions although, as is to be expected, its categories and assumptions share some of the limitations of those current in medieval times.

In a busy life engaged in pastoral and scholarly activity, which included teaching, providing spiritual guidance for nuns and Beguines, while holding a number of important positions in the Dominican Order, the life of Meister Eckhart (1260-1328) exemplifies “being led into God” the Dominican way in which action and contemplation are ultimately one. From Eckhart one learns that God cannot be grasped by the senses, nor by the logical abstracting mind. Eckhart’s theology is rich, many-sided and paradoxical and he stretches the borders of linguistic

expression to the utmost. At the same time he resonates with modern minds in his vision of the spiritual life as a tension of opposites.

I have always been fascinated by the theology of Catherine of Siena (1347-1380), deeply embedded in and developed within the Sienese social context and Roman ecclesial politics. Catherine reminds us that theology is always done in a political, sociological as well as economic context. As a woman she also crossed religious, political and social frontiers in a way that continues to make her religious expression fresh and novel even today. Her early life of isolation and solitude blossomed into one of unparalleled engagement. She grapples with immense issues – born of the confrontation between truth and untruth, courage and cowardice, self and others, church and world. Her mysticism became not only integrated with, but inseparable from her life of ministry as a woman at the very heart of the world loved by God. Her theology is experiential and relational, attributes which continue to be recognized as characteristic of feminist and liberation theology today.

The life of Bartolomé de Las Casas (1484-1566) is inextricably connected with the discovery of the New World. As a slave-owner in the early years of colonisation of the Americas he gradually came to understand that the theologians of the Empire, while basing their arguments on a theology of saving the indigenous people from their idolatrous beliefs, were really justifying a gospel in the service of material wealth. In asking the questions “Who is the Indian?” and “What means are justifiably used for his or her conversion?”, Las Casas found himself on the frontiers of the political and religious struggles of his age. His mystical and evangelical intuition was that the Indian was a member of the body of Christ. Later, as Dominican friar and bishop, he used his authority to uphold the human rights of the indigenous peoples of the Americas. In this he was an early forerunner of the modern human rights movement.

I have learnt from these, as well as from many contemporary Dominicans, how to engage theologically as an Australian Dominican with the questions and issues of my own time and place.

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German Translation by Kerstin-Marie Berretz OP (Oberhausen, Germany):

Patricia Madigan, Dialogisch, kontextuell und den Anderen verpflichtet, in: Wort und Antwort 57 (2016), 77-78.



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On 7th September 1996, during his second visit to Hungary, at Győr, Pope St John Paul II said: “If we proclaim the Gospel in Hungarian society with renewed strength, our primary aim is to rediscover Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and to keep to his truth, because ‘Religion in Christ is no more groping attempt to find God, but rather the answer of believing in the God who reveals himself.’ [...] You are to open yourselves bravely with reason and heart before Christ Jesus. He is the same yesterday, today and forever. In him is the salvation of humanity, not in the profit-seeking and materialistic opinions of today’s world! No other ‘Gospel’ gives hope for a future worthy of humanity!”

These words, spoken some twenty years ago, have much to say to us Dominicans in Central Europe to this day. In his speech the Pope demands above all an opening for Christ. So what consequences does the Pope’s challenge have for today’s Central European theologians?

1) Theology is there to bring people to reflection: Humankind is meant to get to know Christ as truth, and to adhere to his truth. Reason is the means of reflection, and reflection is to help people find God in everything. As human nature does not remain free of the influence of the world, humankind always needs supernatural truth, that is, a clear knowledge of oneself and of the world which surrounds us. We create our knowledge not just from natural sciences, however well God can be known from observation of the world or from philosophy. It is only in relation to God that humankind can understand itself and the world well and perfectly, and grow in maturity. To discover and order these relationships to God, the world and oneself, seems to be a permanent task for every Christian, a task which it is the theologian’s job to support.

2) The theologian is to help people to respond personally to God: The fact that the truth of Christ has appeared demands that people have a thoughtful response to it. This response to God places a demand not just on human reason, but also on our hearts. Like every human being – and indeed before all others – the theologian is appointed in this to search for God with his or her reason and his or her heart. It is on these two pillars that, in human terms, a

healthy, spiritual and full life can be preserved. Theologians are before all else to pass on to humankind what they have picked up and kept with their reason and heart from God's revelation, which was given to the whole Church. It is thus that theologians may serve as mediators of divine truth to humankind, so that people who search for the truth can be brought to the Church and accompanied in a personal response within it.

3) The theologian teaches people to keep a lively and permanent relationship with God: The truth which remains always the same, yesterday, today and forever is something we must live every day. Theology as an academic training is in itself not enough for living a Christian life. This training must always be moving us, because life is active and seeks a response in every situation. Hence what academic training must move a theologian the most to do is to actualise Christian truth, and thereby bring people closer to God. A part of this actualisation is the intention of finding God in all historical situations, because God works in historical situations and can change evil into good. From this search for God must arise the wish to transmit the truth to humankind.

4) The theologian is to help people to discover the Gospel in the Church: Belief is no private matter. It has an effect not only on my future, my – eternal – life, but also on the lives of others. The Church is an indispensable means for understanding Christ and accepting him. Nowadays it is a great challenge for theologians to convince people of their need for the Church. Without the Church, theology can neither be understood nor lived out. Because of this, the Church must be proclaimed not only as an institution of this world, but rather, today, it must first be proclaimed all the more as a sign of God's turning towards humankind.

So we come from Truth to community. In his speech that time the Pope invited people to a dialogue with Christ: a permanent dialogue with reason and heart. From this, we Dominicans seek to win the world for Christ not only with our knowledge, but with the power of our conviction and the authenticity of our occupation. And isn't this just our first and most important task in the Jubilee Year of our Order?

Tibor Bejczy OP

German Original:

Tibor Bejczy, Christus als Wahrheit erkennen und lehren, in: Wort und Antwort 57 (2016), 57-58.



Georges M.M. Cottier OP †

Dr. phil. Cardinal Georges M.M. Cottier OP, Lect. Theol. (1922-2016), Swiss philosopher and Theologian emeritus of the Pontifical Household.

A des esprits modernes la devise de notre Ordre, *veritas* peut paraître anachronique et désuète. Car la mentalité culturelle qui domine notre temps est relativiste. Et il ne s'agit pas là d'un phénomène secondaire, et accidentel. Nombreux sont ceux qui pensent qu'il y a là le signe d'un esprit émancipé, libéré de l'ingénuité des générations du passé.

Nietzsche a porté un diagnostic qui touche le cœur de la mentalité actuelle, en parlant de « méfiance méthodique ». Un des précurseurs du rationalisme moderne, Descartes, a forgé le mythe du « malin génie », qui exprime la peur d'être trompé, comme si notre intelligence, à condition d'appliquer une méthode de penser adéquate, était par elle-même infaillible, la tromperie étant une sorte d'agression venue du dehors.

L'individualisme est une autre source du relativisme. Il s'exprime notamment au plan moral par la formule : à chacun sa vérité. Et comme de la vérité on a retenu qu'elle se définit par l'adéquation, on a déplacé celle-ci de l'objet au sujet. La vérité devient l'accord avec soi-même. Certains préfèrent parler de sincérité. Une autre forme de l'individualisme fait de la liberté le principe suprême, si bien que la liberté est créatrice des valeurs, y compris de la vérité. La liberté ainsi est guidée par les valeurs qu'elle se donne, qu'elle choisit. En général, la sécularisation qui fait de la raison humaine le fondement premier de la pensée aboutit au même résultat.

Il m'a semblé que ce bref détour nous permet de mieux saisir la force de notre devise. Il nous rappelle également que nous devons être libres de tout conformisme.

Veritas exprime l'intuition évangélique de saint Dominique : la *prédication* qui définit notre vocation est dans l'axe des paroles du *Prologue* de l'Évangile de Jean (1 Jn. 1,1 7). « Car la Loi fut donnée par l'intermédiaire de Moïse ; la grâce et la vérité sont venues par Jésus-Christ ». La vérité divine est vie et cette vie, commencée ici-bas, trouvera sa plénitude dans la vision béatifique.

La théologie est une forme de la prédication, elle est attestation et explicitation du mystère de Dieu, qui est la vérité première et la source de toute vérité.

De saint Dominique, les témoins nous ont rapporté qu'il avait le sens de la responsabilité de la parole, qui doit être respectée, car elle est le véhicule de la vérité : *cum Deo vel de Deo*. La formule, au-delà de la dévotion personnelle, a une portée exemplaire. Elle désigne le style de la théologie. Saint Thomas l'a parfaitement traduite : *contemplata divis tradere*.

La sécularisation de la pensée à laquelle j'ai fait allusion comme cause du relativisme a une conséquence anthropologique. En effaçant Dieu de son horizon, l'homme est devenu problématique, il est la proie du doute sur sa propre identité. Cette crise était prévisible puisque l'homme a été créé à l'image et ressemblance de Dieu.

Ce n'est pas un fait accidentel que dès l'origine Dieu ait suscité dans l'Ordre des théologiens de génie comme Albert le Grand et Thomas d'Aquin. C'est pourquoi la fidélité à saint Thomas et à ses grandes intuitions nous est spécialement confiée.

A ce propos je voudrais relever un point qui me paraît fondamental. Saint Thomas a donné une signification et une ampleur proprement chrétiennes à l'affirmation majeure d'Aristote sur l'attitude première de l'intelligence devant la réalité qu'est l'admiration, le *thaumazein*. La réalité est pleine de sens, elle est intelligible, elle parle à notre intelligence, en comblant notre attente et en ne cessant de l'éveiller à une constante découverte. Pour l'intelligence chrétienne cet émerveillement a pour objet le mystère de la création et le mystère de la Croix rédemptrice. Le sujet pensant n'est pas constamment renvoyé à lui-même. Il est fait pour s'ouvrir à la surprenante vérité des choses et à la source de toute vérité. C'est pourquoi cette expérience fondatrice ne va pas sans perception de la beauté, sans amour et sans joie.

Ce sont là des traits de notre vocation intellectuelle, de sa liberté de notre amour du prochain et aussi de notre compassion pour ceux qui sont captifs de l'erreur et de notre désir d'être témoins de la lumière.

Georges M.M. Cottier OP

German Translation by Margret Burkhart
OPL (Berlin, Germany):

Georges M.M. Cottier, Predigt der
göttlichen Wahrheit, in: Wort und
Antwort 57 (2016), 71-72.



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Given my own origins – Egypt – and the number of Arabic Dominicans in the region, which does not even amount to 15 brethren, of whom only a few are engaged in Christian theology, I would like to turn my attention towards the future and ask the question: What *will* Dominican theology in the Middle East be?

In the year 451, a schism occurred between the Coptic and the Carolingian Churches at the Council of Chalcedon. This schism impeded the Church's theological development in Egypt, which had produced a great number of the Church Fathers. These left an extensive theological opus, the Alexandrian School, and, with St. Anthony the Great, founded Christian monasticism.

Today, we face the challenge of reconciling tradition and modernity. Theology needs liberation from its past. It is remarkable that, in Arabic, the words "objectionable renewal" (*bid'a*) and creativity (*ibdā'*) have the same origin, which is why there are often concerns that "creativity" is accompanied by a turning away from what is right. Hence, theology of the last 1,500 years – with the exception of the period between the 9th and the 13th century – consisted mostly of no more than repetition of the ideas of the first five centuries. It was accompanied by a largely defensive, also partly aggressive, attitude towards the developments that arose from the questions of the following centuries. The conviction was that adherence to the faith and imitation of the past would safeguard the theological legacy.

The Dominicans, in belonging to an 800 year old order that dedicated itself to theological work, represent a counter model. This pursuit liberated itself from solely serving past traditions. It respects the religious legacy without letting itself be a prisoner of traditions. Above all, however, it is in touch with an authentic theological thinking that brings about renewals that do justice to the current challenges of our cultural, geographical and political situation.

Arabic Catholics have sought to overcome this isolation, in which other Arabic theologians also find themselves, by looking towards the West. This is not surprising, since they have studied at universities in Europe and America. This, however, led to their theology simply following the Western one. In addition, the majority of Arabic theologians who have studied in the West not only imported a theology, but also the theological contexts and discourses which reflect the European situation but not the Egyptian one. One example of this is the fear of Liberation Theology and its connection with communism, even though neither were common phenomena in Egypt.

This dependency on Western theology, on the part of Arabic theologians, went hand in hand with a kind of cultural and linguistic alienation, both of many theologians and of Arabic Christians as a whole. Most Christians in Egypt (and some in Lebanon), for example, do not see themselves as Arabs but associate themselves with other groups, such as the Copts, Assyrians, Armenians etc. At the same time, they do not refer to the Arabic heritage and its cultural sources, its philosophy, social sciences and culture. Thus, the majority of Arabic theologians isolated themselves, from the beginning of the 14th century, in a Christian thinking that denied the reality of an Islamic shaped culture and of a majority Muslim population.

In the future, Dominican theology in the Middle East will have to work on the liberation of theology and on the development of new approaches that are unaffected by colonial history, that counteract social alienation and that do not follow what is "Western". This is the complex of Near Eastern Christians who reject the fact that Islam emerged in a situation of difficulty among Christians. Islam is a reality and part of our culture. Thus, the colonization of most countries in the Middle East was not a direct military colonization, but an ideological one, that resulted from the Arabic glorification of the West. Why are most Arabic theologians more attracted to Western European theology than to developing an Arabic theology? It is because they are still unaware of their complex which holds that everything Arabic is Islamic, and that the Arabic language and Arabic thinking belong only to Muslims. This Arabic complex and its Christian form outwardly criticize the Western world which they inwardly glorify and which they follow without resistance. The new Dominican theology will reappraise history from the viewpoint of the weak.

In future, Dominican theology should be one that is embodied: Monks and Friars should not simply imitate Western theology but rather build on it and develop new approaches that are applicable to their Arabic situation. Arabic circumstances should be the starting point. In this, the Dominican convent in Cairo, with its Institute for Islamic Studies, will play a role by advising theologians to choose a language that expresses our closeness to Muslims – a language that does not act as a deterrent. What will this new theology look like? Dominican theology will be characterized by the study of the Arabic theologians, the recognition of the religious heritage, serious critique and the development of ideas that help our times. Thus, a modern Arabic theology can be created which draws on the genius of earlier theologians and which, at the same time, is open to new questions and to a new spirituality. It will have recourse to the past, especially to the golden age of Arabic philosophers, and it will take its thinking from the Arabic theology of this time. It will be a theology with the Muslims in mind, not to convert them but

to approximate itself to the theological language spoken by the majority of people around us – to build bridges and to overcome the misunderstandings, hatred and fears that a minority might have of the majority. Arabic Christian theology will be a pioneer by providing approaches to deal with the Arabic-Muslim intellectual heritage and by liberating itself from alienation and isolation.

Dominican Theology can play a decisive role in establishing a Christian Arabic theology of liberation that would deepen the concept of “earth”. In the same way that there is a post-Auschwitz theology, there will be a new reflection on a theology of revolution in the light of the Arab Spring, a theology after the two Gulf wars and the invasion of Iraq, and of course, a theology after the foundation of the State of Israel. Arab theology will be a theology that would examine the concept of earth, starting with its biblical and theological foundations all the way through to the Palestinian question and what the Palestinians have experienced beforehand in terms of murders, dispossessions and occupations without falling into an antisemitic theology. It will be a theology that refuses violence and sectarianism, that grants love to both the persecutor as well as the victim. To the victim by granting him justice and to the persecutor by revealing and criticizing his works without bitterness, and especially by calling upon a peaceful struggle against the objectivity of sin.

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German Translation by Simon Conrad
(Caire, Egypt):

John G. Khalil, *Unterwegs zu einer arabischen Befreiungstheologie*, in: *Wort und Antwort* 57 (2016), 75-76.



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To speak in the spirit of Thomas Aquinas: It seems that there is no such thing as Dominican theology. This would be Thomas' way to say that, counter to common belief, there *is* such thing as Dominican theology, in a way. This is exactly what I intend to say here.

The Dominican tradition does not focus on 'to have and to hold'. It is a tradition of wandering around, begging for food and shelter. As for theology, Dominic did not encourage his followers to develop a separate theology, but send them away as soon as possible so as to preach to all.

The start of the Dominican Order was embedded in a much broader movement of people who, in the midst of societal and cultural turmoil, wanted to live a life according to the Gospel. "Take no gold, or silver, or copper in your belts", they read in the Gospel according to Matthew, "no bag for your journey, or two tunics, or sandals, or a staff; for laborers deserve their food" (Matt. 10:9-10). This attempt to live with the bare necessities was a revolution in comparison with the religious life taking shape in abbeys or in the dedication of the Canons Regular to the liturgy in their cathedrals.

Saint Dominic was such a canon in Osma, Spain. On a journey together with his bishop Diego, he saw the necessity to preach the Gospel from a position that was directly connected to everyday life in the world. The Cathars, who were highly successful in the South of France, preached that only those disconnecting themselves from the material life of food and procreation would be saved. Dominic, as Preacher of Grace (*Predicator gratiae*), contested this strongly: "In this is love, not that we loved God but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins" (1 John 4:10). But the Cathars were successful partly because they were without possessions, living the lives of the apostles in the early church. This is what Dominic took from them.

Religious life as traveling, eating and sleeping among the common folks in order to be able to credibly preach to them, from the midst of their world: It was a revolution and remains revolutionary to this day.

This vision of preaching in poverty has not been handed down from one generation to the next. For quite some time therefore, Dominicans saw poverty as an ascetic value in its own right, and not in its direct connection to their preaching mission. And they considered the content of what they preached as their possession, from which they could take and give freely and at will. In the nineteenth century, the Dominican mission of living a religious life dedicated to preaching in poverty was rediscovered. It is not claiming too much, I think, to suggest that the rediscovery of the Dominican mission, and modern Dominican theology, started with Henri-Dominique Lacordaire (1802-1861). Lacordaire re-established the Dominican Order in France after the French revolution, but in point of fact he re-founded it as really and truly an order of preachers directed to preaching.

Lacordaire did not intend to return to the pre-revolutionary situation. The mission of the Dominican Order as he saw it was based on the insight that – as Lacordaire phrased it – *présence au monde est présence à Dieu*: Presence in the world is presence with God. From this there would then develop a form of theology that could be called Dominican.

In the 1940s and 1950s, Lacordaire’s adage became a slogan within the movement of worker priests. This movement wanted to reconnect the church with the workers. Priests, and many Dominicans among them, started to live among the workers. They took jobs in factories, mines and harbors. The experiment of the worker priests was terminated in 1954, but its influence has been lasting.

Dominican theologian historian Marie-Dominique Chenu (1895-1990) was closely connected to the worker priests. Chenu developed a view of theology not as a static treasure, but as a reflection on the contemporary situation and of God’s involvement in it. It is God’s faithful engagement with the people in their ongoing history that makes faith and theology possible. Instigated by Chenu, the Second Vatican Council would then come to speak of a phrase therefore coined by “reading the signs of the times” (*Gaudium et spes*, 4).

Dominican theology, in my view, is reading God’s presence in the signs of the times and in the light of the Gospel. We are still discovering what this means for the method and the content of theology, but for me there is no other way.

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German Translation by Theresa Hüther
OPL (Bonn, Germany):

Erik Borgman, Gottes Präsenz in den
Zeichen der Zeit lesen, in: Wort und
Antwort 57 (2016), 63-64.



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Che cos'è una teologia domenicana? Cerco di rispondere alla domanda proposta dalla redazione *Wort und Antwort* non senza qualche perplessità. Rifuggo da definizioni identitarie che rischiano di essere modelli teorici senza riscontro nella vita e portatrici di contrapposizioni e pretese di superiorità. Trovo talvolta annoianti espressioni del tipo: 'noi domenicani non siamo come i gesuiti... la preghiera domenicana non è come quella benedettina...'.

Per questo la domanda sui caratteri di una teologia domenicana mi pone in difficoltà: in questi ultimi mesi ho scritto una prefazione ad una ricerca di un amico frate domenicano direttore di un prestigioso istituto di ricerca, riconosciuto come autorità a livello internazionale sui temi del recente Sinodo sulla famiglia (2015). Nel suo studio articolava una lettura di san Tommaso in rapporto ai temi dibattuti e alle situazioni attuali per offrire un contributo a scelte di apertura e di ripensamento della dottrina. Ma il suo studio ha visto la reazione scomposta di altri frati, anch'essi domenicani, che occupano posti di rilievo in sedi accademiche dell'Ordine che pensano la dottrina come immutabile e astorica e chiedono la conversione della mente e del cuore dell'autore. Che tristezza! Qual è la teologia domenicana in questo caso? Fare teologia non implica forse proprio accettare la libertà di un pensiero che s'interroga sulla vita e si pone non come ultima definizione, ma come parola provvisoria, ricerca di fronte a Dio per liberare la vita di chi è oppresso?

Penso quindi che teologia sia sostantivo che si declina al plurale: teologie quindi, in rapporto alle esperienze di fede ai tempi e ambienti di vita. Teologie nei contesti, nei tempi che cambiano, in situazioni diverse, non pensiero autoreferenziale e presuntuoso, ma ricerca capace di dubbio, di ascolto, di discussione. Cammino di interrogazione e di incertezze.

Non mi sono mai sentito teologo nel senso di possedere un ruolo da riconoscere. Mi sono invece sempre sentito teologo nel condividere la fede con altri, in atteggiamento di ricerca. Compagnia nel cammino può essere chi dedica il suo impegno principale allo studio di discipline teologiche, chi opera nella vita delle comunità, chi svolge il suo lavoro e ha impegni diversi ma s'interroga sul senso del proprio quotidiano, chi cerca di vivere la fede in modo

consapevole e si lascia provocare dalle inquietudini del tempo e chi non condividendo la mia fede condivide l'amicizia, la fatica del vivere, la vita nella sua complessità.

Per fare teologia c'è bisogno di studio, sì, ma per prepararsi ad essere in grado di condividere, per rendersi capaci di cercare insieme ad altri, uomini e donne, il senso e la chiamata del vivere cristiano oggi, per varcare i confini stabiliti, per intraprendere cammini comuni. Lo studio in una ricerca di Dio per essere capaci di condivisione di umanità e di divenire umani.

Per me questo significa essere apprendista teologo e rimanere tale: questo forse è il cammino. Ho insegnato e operato in diversi istituti teologici, ma sono convinto che teologia possa sorgere come esperienza in collegamento alla riflessione e come inquietudine di vita, nelle relazioni, negli incontri, nell'accogliere domande per pensare la fede nel cammino. E non può andare senza un continuo riferimento alla prassi.

Marie Dominique Chenu dava una definizione di teologia come intelligenza della fede solidale con il proprio tempo. Per me è stata ed è innanzitutto esperienza della fede che diviene espressione di una spiritualità come unione di fede e vita, partecipazione all'avventura umana in tutte le sue forme. Teologia si delinea come impegno di intelligenza, di interrogazione, per ,leggere dentro' la Parola di Dio nei molti modi in cui ci raggiunge. C'è Parola di Dio nella Scrittura, nella vicenda di Israele e nella memoria di Gesù testimoniata e giunta a noi. C'è Parola di Dio nelle parole di credenti e di non credenti, nella vita e nei libri di persone di altre tradizioni religiose, dei sapienti e di tutti coloro che nutrono una ricerca. E così pure Parola di Dio giunge dalla vita dei piccoli e di chi è vittima oggi dell'ingiustizia e dell'iniquità, dalle vicende dei popoli. Gli incontri quotidiani con le persone riflettono un raggio di quella luce che illumina ogni uomo e donna che viene nel mondo. C'è Parola di Dio nei processi pur contraddittori della storia ed essa è da leggere nel libro della natura di cui scopriamo sempre più essere parte, nei movimenti della creazione.

Quello che si scrive con tanta fatica e trova pubblicazione in libri può finire in biblioteche polverose dove potrà trovare oblio e costituire al massimo alimento da rosicchiare per qualche topolino. Ma forse proprio questo è preferibile quale esito del fare teologia. In fondo un topolino che trova da mangiare è una creatura che trova di che vivere. E forse la teologia non ha altro fine che questo: poter essere un contributo perché qualcuno abbia la vita. C'è una teologia che sorge dal quotidiano della vita e che può nutrire il quotidiano della vita di altri. Questa immagine evocativa di una donna teologa italiana Adriana Zarri mi ha sempre sollecitato (*Teologia del quotidiano*, Einaudi 2012).

Nella mia limitata esperienza trovo motivo di impegno nel pensare che san Domenico aveva a cuore le persone. Era capace di provare compassione, di non restare indifferente. Si lasciava toccare dai drammi di uomini e donne anonime, le persone che incontrava e di cui aveva imparato a conoscere le fatiche. Il suo carattere lo rendeva sensibile alle parole umane, quelle pronunciate e quelle custodite nei cuori, e capace di piangere per gli altri. Sapeva ascoltare nelle loro vite un messaggio di vangelo, di buona notizia, scorgendo nella loro vita il farsi vicino di Dio.

Fare teologia per me ha sempre significato cercare di mettere insieme la speranza che viene dalla fede e l'ascolto dei percorsi dei volti e delle storie delle persone di questo tempo. La bella notizia del vangelo non è nostro possesso ma ci raggiunge, dalla Parola e dalla storia. Ci spinge a tornare alla ricerca di voci del passato, per riandare ai testi biblici, per rileggere le testimonianze e per interpretare le vie del futuro, ma anche per aprirci ad una lettura di altri testi, di altri orizzonti dove lo Spirito precede. Ho sempre pensato che teologia non è portare qualcosa, formulazioni ricevute ma accogliere e rileggere l'esperienza della testimonianza della fede in contesti sempre diversi per aprire cammino, per lasciare spazio al correre della Parola, al suo crescere oltre i confini. E' valorizzare i segni della presenza di Dio e dell'agire dello Spirito che ci raggiunge da fuori l'accampamento: nelle parole e nelle inquietudini di chi è sensibile, nell'esperienza di chi soffre, nella normalità di vite che sperimentano la comune condizione umana nell'amare soffrire, gioire, sperare.

Fare teologia per me ha senso in relazione ad un percorso di vita per cui è importante preoccuparsi delle piccole cose che sono il tessuto della vita e con la preoccupazione che la propria esperienza trovi modo di essere respiro e apra strade di vita e di liberazione per altri. Se anche questa potesse essere considerata teologia domenicana sarei contento...

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German Translation by Lucas L.
Wieshuber OP (Mainz, Germany):

Alessandro Cortesi, Dominikanische
Theologie als gemeinsam geteilte
Erfahrung, in: Wort und Antwort 57
(2016), 68-70.



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In Dominican theology the mission is to defend the belief in the incarnation of God in Jesus, and in the integrity of creation, and also to cooperate with sacramental grace through preaching and teaching. Since preaching is the sharing of the fruits of one's ascetic contemplation, it calls for the disciplined study of theology and its dissemination within the cultural context of society. To be effective, a preacher must be competent in answering the questions of the time and to respond to the needs and desires of people for the teachings of the Gospel. Therefore the friar should be first and foremost a man of faith, prayer and learning; and then, in response to call of Pope Francis at his first Chrism mass in Rome in 2013, "to be a shepherd living with the smell of the sheep."

Since the goal of preaching is the belief in God as a truth arrived at through intellectual enquiry, this does not therefore conflict with reason. The practice of intellectual enquiry in the life of prayer and contemplation leads the preacher to the truth that God is the origin and fulfillment of all things, and Christ as the way, the truth and the life (cf. John 14:6). For theology to be credible, it is necessary and important to understand and address the cries of the poor, the oppressed, the dejected, and the crucified, because God is always speaking through them. The Constitutions of the Order of Preachers encourage friars "to learn and recognize the Spirit working in the midst of the people of God, and to identify the hidden treasures in the various forms of human culture, by which human nature is fully manifested and new paths are opened to the Truth" (LCO 99.II).

The Dominican General Chapter of Quezon City (1977) proposed the teaching of the catechism in diverse cultures, preaching within their own political-cultural polity, engaging and establishing social justice and peace wherever possible, and engaging in the apostolate of the mass media.

Since 1962, Myanmar has been a totalitarian state ruled by military generals and has been an isolated and impoverished nation. The reform process has undergone significant interruptions, human rights limitations, and increased arrests of peaceful land protestors. Students and journalists have also been arrested. The political transition of the country is also

complicated by entrenched political and economic interests, ethnic divisions, and communal (Buddhist/Muslim) violence, intensified by special interest prejudices and fanaticism.

The Catholic Church in Myanmar is a “small flock” and experiences enormous challenges in attempting to promote and establish peaceful co-existence among the inter-cultural, inter-ethnic and inter-religious mix that is Myanmar. This requires well informed, competent and experienced missionaries who are experts in dialogue, in conflict mediation and resolution, as well as possessing linguistic competence, given that Myanmar is also a multilingual nation.

“Woe to us if we do not preach the Gospel” (1 Cor. 9:16). The mission of the Order to Myanmar was inaugurated in 2011, during a critical transition period when the people experienced difficulties such as arms-conflict, and social issues arising from human trafficking, illegal migration, child labor and prostitution. Our mission becomes a call to side with the poor and the powerless, while discerning and denouncing the social evils of sin and injustice. Siding with the least empowered social groups means translating the Gospel into a particular form of life, to scrutinize the signs of the times with the eyes of faith, and to establish life, hope, justice and peace, according to the needs of the Church (cf. Mark 16:15). As prophets of our time, we are sent out to practice and share the virtue of hope, that is the fruit of our faith in the Lord, who constantly tells us: “Be not afraid, for I am with you” (Jer. 1:8).

The preaching and teaching ministry in Myanmar is becoming more dynamic, and requires the attitudes of compassion and humility in order to have a meaningful impact. According to the Dominican historian, Marie-Humbert Vicaire, St. Dominic’s most striking gift was ‘compassion’ towards the suffering and to the vulnerable. Chrys McVey OP added that: “Dominic wept, and the Order was born”, which encourages us to be “brothers” to the dislocated poor.¹ St. Dominic’s love for learning and charity to the poor is expressed in his dictum, “I could not bear to prize dead skins [i.e. parchments], when living skins were starving and in need.”²

Pope Francis proclaimed the *Jubilee Year of Mercy* to inspire us “to open the holy door of mercy”, which means to bridge the separations between inside and outside, sin and grace (cf. Mark 7:18-19); to let us enter a new place by showing mercy and not condemnation (cf. Matt. 9:13); to provide protection and salvation (cf. John 10:7). The 800th anniversary of the confirmation of the Order invites us to open a holy door of mercy to the world, particularly in Myanmar. It is a challenge to question our traditional concepts, models, and attitudes; and to develop a healthy relationship in dialogue with people of different faiths and cultures.

As Dominicans, the challenge is to live authentically the evangelical counsels of chastity, poverty, and obedience in faith and charity, and as expressed in our community life. Today, the different cultures are facing difficulties in living together, especially when the powerless encounter different forms of oppression and inequality. By acknowledging the dignity of each person and sharing our respective gifts, we may then be able to live as brothers and sisters. Therefore, a Dominican theology is a call to love – that is to be human, loving and friendly.

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German Translation by Karl Giese OP
(Vechta, Germany):

George Phe Mang, Dominikanische
Theologie in Myanmar: Aufruf zur
Barmherzigkeit, in: Wort und Antwort 57
(2016), 85-86.

¹ Chrys McVey, "Dominican Values: Alive to the Real and the Possible," in: G. Kelly and K. Saunders, eds, *Towards the Intelligent Use of Liberty: Dominican Approaches in Education*, Adelaide, 2007, 123-134, here 124.

² Acta canonizationis sancti Dominici, ed. by A. Walz, in: *Monumenta historica sancti patris Dominici* [= *Monumenta Ordinis Fratrum Praedicatorum Historiae* 16, Fasz. 2] Rome, 1935, nos 35, 154.



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The first requisite of any Dominican theology is that it be the fruit of contemplation and secondly that it be communicated to others: the famous *contemplata aliis tradere* of Thomas Aquinas. Although study was prescribed for the Friars Preachers from the very beginnings of the Order, this study of theology was always conceived as a means to an end, “for the sake of the preaching”, and never an end in itself. Essentially this theology must be soteriological in purpose, and Christocentric in practice, since the salvation of souls was Dominic’s prime concern. Christ the mediator, through whom men are saved, was constantly present in Dominic’s prayer entirely oriented towards salvation. As Jordan of Saxony explains, Dominic believed that he would only become fully a member of the body of Christ from the moment at which he would be able to give himself up completely to gaining souls, in imitation of Jesus, universal Saviour (*Libellus* n° 13).

The Dominican order is quintessentially a broad church, encompassing erudite ecclesiastics, enclosed nuns, missionaries, and lay people of all categories. For a theology to be truly Dominican, it should be relevant to all of these categories of people and not limited to an academic elite. The truth of this is borne out by the fact that two members of the Order of Preachers have been elevated to the rank of Doctor of the Church. Yet on a superficial level, these two could not be more different: Thomas Aquinas, author of closely argued theological treatises and Catherine of Siena, a young lay woman living at home barely lettered, and yet capable of deep theological reflection.

Is not an illiterate theologian a contradiction in terms? A quotation from St Bruno provides a key: a professor at the cathedral school at Reims, Bruno wrote to the lay brothers at the Grande Chartreuse: “Though you are unlettered men, yet the mighty God writes on your hearts with his finger not only his love but a knowledge of his holy law. You show by your actions what you love and what you know.” Love and knowledge mysteriously combined by the finger of God, such was the genesis of the theology of Catherine. Dominican spirituality

and Dominican study of theology are indeed intimately intertwined, for Dominicans use intelligence as a tool in their search for God; it is the study of the *sacra pagina* that nourishes the prayer of the brethren, sisters and laity. Catherine, even if she could not read heard the scriptures proclaimed and commented on in the Dominican church at Siena. Dominicans have *Veritas* as their motto, but their search for truth is not simply speculative. Catherine writes eloquently on this point; God speaking to her in the *Dialogue* declares: “The soul on fire with love of my truth desiring to make it loved by all, collectively and individually, contributes unceasingly to the good of the whole world.”

No theological writings by St Dominic have survived and it could be a handicap for an Order not to have texts from the hand of its founder, but as St Paul says in the Epistle to the Corinthians: “the letter kills, but the spirit gives life” (II Cor. 3:6). Dominicans are not crushed by the letter, but remain free to do theology according to the spirit of their holy patriarch. Instead of handing out theological texts to his brethren, Dominic gave the example. The first testimonies are clear on this point: *aut loqui de aut loqui cum Deo*. This was not direct teaching from master to disciple; rather Dominic saved souls by speaking with God in prayer and then by preaching to men about God. The brethren saw him doing it and followed his example. As Eric de Clermont Tonnerre OP said: “Dominic’s discretion is in itself a form of teaching for he added nothing to the doctrine of the Church”, he was quite simply a man of the Church from his earliest youth, an innovator yes, a rebel no. The theology of the Order of Preachers has always been intimately linked to struggles in defence of Christianity whether in the 13th or the 21st century (Dominic was to find Christian doctrine threatened by Cathar heresy in the South of France, as it was in Spain in his day by continuing Moorish occupation).

Dominican theology sometimes seems erudite and dogmatic, but these are not its essential characteristics. It seeks rather to be rooted in the sovereign place occupied by truth in the life of the Christian and in the life of the Church. Consequently, for Dominicans preaching and doing theology are not separate activities, but two aspects of the same activity, two sides of one coin.

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German Translation by Christoph T.
Brandt OP (Mainz, Germany):

Barbara E. Beaumont, Liebe und Wissen
im Leben der Kirche, in: Wort und
Antwort 57 (2016), 55-56.

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Status: April 2021